

“Families First is supporting 1000s of Welsh families to improve their lives”

– Huw Irranca-Davies

Families First is an early intervention and prevention programme, aimed at improving outcomes for children, young people and families. It is designed to reduce the numbers of families developing more complex needs and requiring more intensive and costly interventions at a later date.

Families First is part of a wide package of measures the Welsh Government has put in place to support parents and families.

The most recent data available show that between April 2015 and March 2017:

- 77% – 12,665 – of parents have benefited from a parenting intervention.
- 80% – 12,567 – of parents improved their ability to support their child’s learning and development needs.
- 78% – 43,111 – of families improved their emotional/mental well-being.
- 73% – 23,395 – of families have reported improved family dynamics.

Later today, the Minister will visit a Families First project in Bangor to see for himself the work they do to support families.

Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“The Welsh Government has made a firm commitment to making a real difference to our youngest children, with a focus on improving outcomes for children and young people through early intervention and prevention.

“Families First puts a team of highly specialised staff around the family, and encourages families to be involved in the identification of issues and the resolution of those issues, recognising the strengths and resources within the family.

“I’m delighted to see literally tens of thousands of families have received targeted support from our Families First teams right across Wales, which in many cases, has proved to be absolutely life-changing.”

Plan launched to improve respiratory health in Wales

It sets out the Welsh Government's vision for respiratory services in Wales and identifies the actions the NHS in Wales will take in response. The plan will focus on delivering care that best impacts on patient experience and outcome and tackling variation in the quality of care.

The plan outlines work to improve smoking cessation services, better diagnose chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and reduce variation in prescribing. Health boards have all committed to:

- appointing a flu jab champion
- ensuring carbon monoxide monitoring and referral is routine smokers attending a respiratory outpatient appointment
- offering patients and parents asthma action plans for better self care
- improve access to exercise-based programmes for people with chronic respiratory conditions.

In 2015, around 15% of adults in Wales were being treated for a respiratory condition and respiratory diseases caused more than 16% of all deaths in Wales. Asthma UK estimates there are around 59,000 children with asthma in Wales, 9.5% of the total.

The Health Secretary has published the plan following a visit to Prince Charles Hospital in Merthyr Tydfil to meet the winner of the prestigious Royal College of Nursing Nurse of the Year award 2017, Louise Walby.

Louise has worked as a Respiratory Nurse Facilitator in a part of the Welsh valleys with one of the worst mortality figures in Britain for chronic lung disease. She was recognised for her work in improving the patient experience and management of COPD, and her work is now being used as an example of best practice across Wales.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said;

"I was delighted to speak to Louise again, following her great achievement at the RCN Awards last year. I am in no doubt that the people of Merthyr Tydfil will benefit from such a dedicated health professional for years to come.

"Improving the respiratory health of the people of Wales is a major challenge for healthcare services. With this plan, we hope to improve the quality of life for many patients with acute or chronic respiratory diseases.

"This plan will support health boards to provide more consistent services across Wales and to deliver services reaching national standards of care for respiratory disease."

Head of Wales, British Lung Foundation Joseph Carter said;

“We now need health boards to respond positively and deliver the plan locally to improve the lives of their citizens.

“We are delighted that the Welsh Government is continuing to provide leadership with a new extended Respiratory Health Delivery Plan.

“The plan recognises the need to invest in pulmonary rehabilitation, NERS and self-management in order to keep people with lung conditions active, informed and out of hospital.

EU boost for £9.4m project will use Caerau’s mine-water to warm local homes

Water in the underground mine workings of the former Caerau colliery has been naturally heated by the earth, and as a geothermal source of energy, Bridgend County Borough Council is investigating how it could be extracted, using heat pump technology and a network of pipes, to warm around 150 nearby homes.

The scale of the scheme will be the first of its kind in the UK and would use existing radiators to heat homes without mine-water ever entering residents’ properties. Among the global leaders in using this type of technology is Holland, which opened the world’s first mine-water power station in 2008 in the town of Heerlen – a Dutch coal-mining area that closed its last mine in the 1970s.

Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, said:

“Our ambition is for our nation to be a world leader in pioneering low carbon energy. This is a cutting-edge model of generating a clean source of renewable energy, drawing on the legacy of our coal mining heritage. It will not only attract further investment to the area, but also address fuel poverty by cutting energy bills and has the potential to be rolled out to Wales and beyond.

“This EU-funded scheme will also create jobs both within the initial construction period and the ongoing supply chain, as well

as offering training and educational opportunities in a very innovative area.”

The findings of a feasibility study to determine if the water is warm enough to heat homes are expected by the end of February. This follows test drilling into the mine workings under the Old Brewers site in Caerau which found that the mining void is full of water to a depth of 230m.

The British Geological Survey has since been testing the temperature, chemistry and volume of the mining-water, with the temperature expected to be around 20.6 degrees celsius – warm enough for the scheme to be a success.

Councillor Richard Young, the council’s Cabinet Member for Communities, said:

“The volume of water and its temperature makes the scheme possible and now we have been awarded £6.5m of EU funds from the Welsh Government, the next phase is to work through the full scope of the scheme and put everything in place to deliver a trailblazing project for the Llynfi Valley. It will also act as a catalyst for other energy project investments, possibly through the City Deal and other investment.”

While the initial heat network will involve 150 properties, and the nearby school and church, there may be potential for the scheme to eventually warm up to a thousand local homes.

An exhibition is planned for spring 2018 when findings from the feasibility study will be shared with Caerau residents and any other parties who are interested in the project. Construction work will begin in 2020.

The scheme is a demonstrator project for the UK Government led Smart System and Heat Programme. The remaining funds for the £9.4m scheme will be made up by the UK Government, Energy Systems Catapult and Bridgend County Borough Council. Other partners include: BGS, Kensa, Egnida, SPECIFIC, Carreg Las, Natural Resources Wales and The Coal Authority.

Statement by Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs on

Avian Influenza

Commenting on the detection of Avian Influenza at two sites in England, Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths said:

Friday 19 January 2018

“I have carefully considered, with advice from our Chief Veterinary Officer, the decision by DEFRA to implement an AI prevention zone to cover all of England, following the raising of the risk level for poultry to “medium” and for wild birds to “high”.

“There is currently no evidence to indicate the presence of avian influenza in Wales and the veterinary risk does not warrant placing compulsory controls on a country wide basis. The finding of avian influenza is in wild birds, not poultry or captive birds, and following veterinary advice I do not consider it is proportionate to declare statutory controls in Wales. We will continue to closely monitor the situation, keep the need for controls under review and encourage poultry keepers to be vigilant and adhere to strict biosecurity protocols to protect their birds. We are ready to step up measures should the situation change.”

Advice on [biosecurity](#) can be found on the Welsh Government website

Take Time to Talk, Listen and Play

A new campaign encouraging parents, carers and guardians to take time to talk, listen and play to help their child’s language development and communication skills has been launched by the Welsh Government today (18th January).

The ‘Take time’ campaign is part of a wider Welsh Government approach to oracy which includes £700,000 of extra funding and support to schools in 2018-19 through regional consortia to help improve the language skills of learners. Funding of £700,000 is already in place for 2017-18.

The campaign will provide practical tips to parents/carers to help children aged 3 to 7 improve their language skills and prepare for school.

Research shows that children who receive this attention have a greater capacity for language, and later literacy, boosting their communication skills and chances of success in later life.

Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams, launched the 'Take time' campaign at Llangattock Church in Wales School, Crickhowell, earlier today where the reception class took part in an workshop to mark National Storytelling Week.

Kirsty Williams said:

"We are prioritising children's speech, language and communication skills because they are the building blocks for success, not only in school but later on in life as well.

"Oracy is essential for developing life skills and we are keen to support parents, carers and guardians as they pass these valuable skills on to their children.

"We know there are many different pressures when you're raising children, sometimes just finding the time can be a challenge, but the message of this campaign is that every effort you make at this early stage will help and the benefits will last a lifetime.

"It's important that we make this as fun and as rewarding a process as possible so the new campaign provides some helpful hints, tips and practical advice for parents, carers and guardians to support the development of their child's bilingual speaking, listening and discussion skills."

Alison Stroud, Head of Wales Office for the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists said:

"The ability to communicate effectively is an essential life skill for all children because it underpins a child's social and emotional development. In particular, the first three years of a child's life are crucial in developing all of a young child's growing need to communicate. Poor speech, language and communication skills can impact their behaviour, mental health, 'school readiness' and even their employability as adults.

"Children should be exposed to as many words as possible in everyday experiences to help them develop their language and promote their communication. There are lots of different ways that parents, carers or guardians can support them, but the simplest way is to keep creating opportunities to listen and talk together with the telly, smart phones and other mobile devices turned off."

From today, advertisements featuring writer and presenter Anni Llyn will run

for two weeks on television, local radio stations and online, encouraging parents, carers and guardians of 3 to 7 year olds to take time to talk, listen and play.

The short animations will include top tips for them to help develop their child's language and communication skills.

Booktrust Cymru's Pori Drwy Stori programme supports key Foundation Phase areas of learning, including literacy and numeracy, as children start the reception class at school.

The Welsh Government funded programme provides bilingual learning materials for use in the classroom, and at home, which will be an important resource for the oracy campaign.

Booktrust Cymru's Pori Drwy Stori programme materials are given to every child in the reception year of school. The termly resources supports parents and carers to engage in their child's learning when they start school and focus on the key Foundation Phase areas of learning, including literacy and numeracy.

Helen Wales from Booktrust Cymru added,

"Pori Drwy Stori allows your child to gain confidence with words in a fun way. Our challenges help children learn and recite rhymes or poetry in a fun way, whilst the magazine we produce encourages children to speak, listen and make decisions. We will be launching new materials and a pilot scheme for schools in Wales to help youngsters improve their oracy skills, and hope that parents and teachers will find these tools useful for promoting language development."

"Pori Drwy Stori aims to make learning fun and to give parents and carers ideas about ways they can support their children to talk and learn. The resources help children and families to have fun learning rhymes, to enjoy sharing books and stories and to play number games. The resources encourage children to speak, listen and make decisions building on our long-established Bookstart programme which encourages families to start talking and sharing books, stories and rhymes from a very young age."

Now in its fourth year, 'Education Begins at Home' aims to encourage parents, carers and guardians to do more of the little things at home that will make a big difference to their child's development and education.

For further information about the 'Education Begins at Home' campaign and the online resources available for parents, please visit www.facebook.com/beginsathome (facebook.com/dechraucartref) and follow us on Twitter @edubeginsathome (@dechraucartref)